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STREET SHEET



THE YOUTH ISSUE

For the past four months, the Street Sheet team has been working hard on the Street Sheet's first ever Youth Issue, an issue created for and by the homeless youth of San Francisco. We've worked closely with youth ambassadors from Larkin Street Youth Services' Youth Advisory Board, Zak Franet and Anubi Daugherty, who have helped fill these pages with their own writing as well as outreach to other young people. Lovingly filled with powerful poetry, compelling personal stories, and fierce artwork, the Youth Issue brings light to the tremendous challenges that youth face in the city, while also demonstrating the daily resistance and power of young people.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Every year, more than two million young people in America will experience homelessness. Most of these young people face physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from parents or guardians at home. Often times, running away from home is the only choice that young people have to escape the abuse and violence. Here are some common reasons that youth become homeless:

Family issues

Many youth run away due to the abuse they may face in the family, particularly due to homophobia. Other times, families might ask youth to leave because they aren't able to meet their mental or physical health needs or because they're unable to care for them.

Transitions from foster care and other public systems

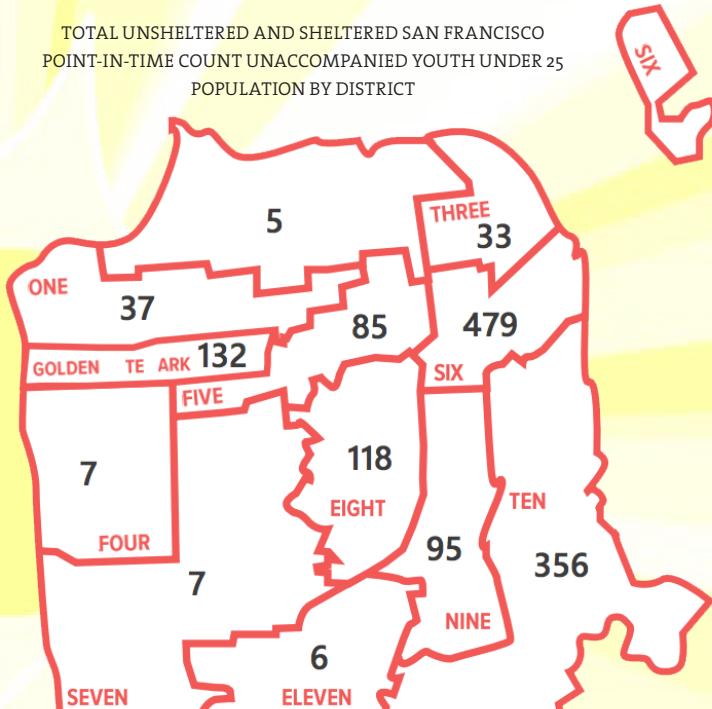
Youth who are in foster care are much more likely to become homeless and remain homeless for a long period of

time. When youth age out of the foster care system or other public institutions, they often do not have anywhere to go and end up on the streets.

Economic issues

When families fall into financial crisis and lose their housing, youth become homeless with their families. However, they may find themselves separated from their families or living on the streets alone because of shelter or child welfare policies.

Here in San Francisco, there are over 1,400 homeless youth, which the City defines as unaccompanied children (under 18) and transitional-age-youth (18-24). According to the 2017 San Francisco Point-in-Time Count, the majority of these young people are living unsheltered. In fact, 93 percent of unaccompanied children and 80 percent of TAY youth have no shelter. Most youth were living in San Francisco or California before they became homeless.

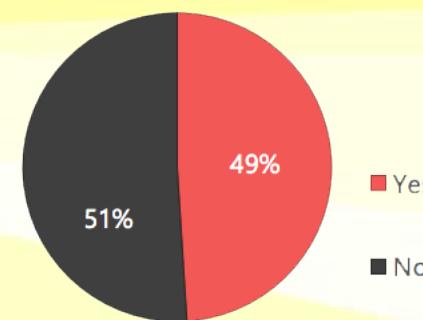


68 PERCENT OF HOMELESS YOUTH ARE ENROLLED IN AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR HAVE SOME TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT.

Homeless youth face an incredible amount of challenges. Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge about available resources, and a dearth of services directed towards young people. Indeed, youth homelessness is highly stigmatized. So says Collette Auerswald, the main author of a UC Berkeley study of homeless youth living in San Francisco. The study, published last year, found that San Francisco's homeless youth are at ten times higher risk of death than their peers.

Homeless youth are often forced to engage in sex in order to survive. Twenty eight percent of youth living in the street and 10 percent living in the shelter engage in

NEARLY HALF OF ALL HOMELESS YOUTH IN SAN FRANCISCO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+.



"survival sex" in exchange for food, shelter, protection, or money. Many do so out of necessity to survive day to day. They are also at high risk of being trafficked for sex.

In addition to the overall lack of youth services, there is a lack of youth shelters. In San Francisco, there are only two youth-specific shelter, both run by Larkin Street Youth Services: the Diamond Youth Shelter, for ages 14 to 17 and the Lark Inn, which serves TAY youth. The number of beds is sparse at each shelter; Diamond only has fifteen beds, while the Lark Inn has 40, which, compared to the number of homeless youth in the city, can only serve 4.6 percent of the homeless youth population. Many youth refuse to go to adult shelters, which can be dangerous and frightening environments, and instead choose to sleep outside.

Despite the challenges that homeless youth face, there is also deep resiliency, determination, kindness and beautiful relationships that are built on the streets. These young people are incredible artists, poets, orators, students, and activists. As we begin to think about solutions to youth homelessness, we must always center youth voices. Young people who have experienced homelessness are the experts. And we must listen.

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Roaddawgz

The following is a selection of writings from homeless youth, drawn from the collection of stories, "The Freedom Manual," which was published by Roaddawgz and the Pacific New Service. Roaddawgz was located in our office for several years, providing homeless youth with a creative, safe space where they could express themselves. While the organization no longer exists, these powerful youth narratives live on.

I WOULD REALLY LOVE TO BECOME GOOD FRIENDS WITH YOU

Dear Mom,

It's been about a year since your last visit and even longer since I've written you a letter. The last time I wrote you I was in jail. I know that I haven't become all that you had hoped and dreamed for me, but I've still got a long time to accomplish things in my life. I'm practically still a kid.

I want you to know what I do to take responsibility for the way my life has become. I sometimes get the feeling that you blame yourself for the things that I've done. You raised me the best way that you knew and never turned your back on me no matter how low I sank, and I appreciate that.

Your support means a lot to me even though I take it for granted sometimes. Like when I hurry our conversations along when we are on the phone. Should treasure those times. I know if my girlfriend Kari could just talk to her mom for five minutes, get a letter, or have someone tell her that they've at least seen her mom and she is alive, she would give the world for that. And I just get bored. It's just always been there for me and I expect it always will be. But it won't and I don't want to wait until it's too late.

I really would love to become good friends with you but it's so hard. We are from two totally different worlds. The only thing you know about the drug culture you learned from me and my escapades. The only thing I know about responsibility and being a self-made success in life I've seen but not really learned from you. Even the places we live reflect our differences. Me in San Francisco and you in Louisiana — that alone says a lot. But we share the same blood and a 25-year-relationship so far and that says a lot, too.

I wish you could understand why I am the way I am, but that is virtually impossible, because I don't fully know. I do know that it began as a reach of freedom. But the further along I got, the more freedom I lost. I gained responsibilities and obligations but not ones that would be considered the right ones.

I now have a responsibility to my girlfriend to take care of her, make sure she's fed and warm at night. I have a shoulder to cry on and a best friend to

get drunk and party with and panhandle with to make sure we make it until her check comes. Also I now have a dog to look after. I have to make sure he's happy, healthy and well-exercised. Without having a job, it's a handful. I'm unemployed, yet constantly busy. Why?

Here's why, and this is the hard part for you as for me. I don't even know how to say it. I guess I just should. Here goes. I'm strung out again. I've been for about a year now. I never wanted to hurt you the way I have. That's why I didn't tell you and would avoid your questions whenever we talked on the phone. I thought telling you would hurt you the way I have. I thought telling you would hurt you more than lying. I'm sorry.

You just can't and probably never will understand me. This addiction is a trap that I keep falling into. Every time I get clean, I start thinking that maybe I could do just a little bit and that it wouldn't hurt and then the cycle starts all over again. And before you know it I'm strung out again.

What kind of life is this? I want out, I really do, but I don't know how. The only way I've kicked before was in jail where you don't have a choice. I can't even get on methadone because I don't have the time. I'm too busy panhandling to make sure we stay well to go to the clinic and wait there for four to five hours. I'd be too sick to beg when I was done. I've thought about going inpatient but who would watch after Kari and our dog Bailey? I'm afraid to leave them for three weeks. Plus Kari works and what would she do with Bailey?

So in summary, Mom, in an attempt to become free, I have become a prisoner. I don't know if I will ever send you this letter. I'm not ready to break your heart yet. But it was nice to get these thoughts out of my head for a little while. Maybe someday after I'm clean I'll show this to you just so you'll know what I went through.

Love ya,
Your prodigal son,

—DUSTIN “BRETT” SNYDER

A GUIDE TO GRIEVING

Raymond was 22 years old when we buried him. He is alive in our memories and always will be. We called him Salamander. He was a good kid, full of imaginations and always good for a laugh. Like most of us on the streets, he had his dreams, dreams that will now never be realized. Sal was a good friend and would have been a good father had we not buried him six months before his daughter was born.

If only he had given life a chance. You see, Salamander committed suicide. He hung himself in my best friend's backyard, where he was living at the time. I will always remember Sal, and all the rest of the friends I've lost along the way.

I was in the midst of my heroin addiction when Sal passed on, so I never really grieved his loss at the time of his death. It wasn't until two years later, when I had sobered up a little, that it hit me — Sal was gone and he wasn't coming back.

You don't have to lose someone to death to go through the whole grieving process. It can also happen when you lose touch or become estranged from a loved one or friend. Grief is just a process of dealing with the pain of an important loss. They call grief a process because it happens in phases. Don't ask me what the phases are, but I can tell you my experience, and how I came to terms with losing a friend to suicide.

DON'T RELY ON DRUGS

When you lose a friend or loved one, it seems easier to deal if you are buried in a fix or high, or drunk out of your skull. As long as you remain intoxicated, your pain becomes distant and almost non-existent. The downside of this is that when you sober up (I mean really sober up, with clean time under your belt) all the pain and grief you have numbed out in the past come tumbling out. It may be too much to bear emotionally and depression will set in full force. That's what happened to me.

IT'S GOOD TO CRY

When the pain and sorrow of Sal's absence hit me, a whole lot of tears came out. That helped. Bottling it up only makes it worse.

TURN TO YOUR FRIENDS

After depression over Sal's death came anger. I was angry that he had been so selfish (or had he? Who am I to say?) by taking the "chicken shit" way out and leaving a child behind. I even felt self-pity at one point, believing that it was pointless to get close to anyone because they just leave and die in the end. I started pushing away my closest friends. That's not good because you really need friends around to help you cope with grief. Even if you are not a good conversationalist, it is important to talk to someone about your loss.

ACCEPT WHAT HAPPENED

After anger set in, denial crept up and kicked me in the ass. I just ignored Sal's death completely. It had been two years since his death, so why bother grieving now? But the truth is I did care, and acknowledging that I cared helped me to come to terms with Sal's death and finally accept that he was gone. I finally felt at peace with what had happened.

LEARN FROM IT

I had heard stories of suicide before from friends, TV, newspapers and magazines, but it had never hit so close to home before Sal. In fact, his funeral was my first. Before Sal died, I used to contemplate suicide myself, but that was just self-pity. Now, the thought never lasts more than a split second before I remember Sal's death.

HONOR THEIR MEMORY

Once you have come to terms with the loss of a loved one and accepted their death or absence, grief becomes so much easier to bear and you can honor their memory in your own way. Drink a 40-ounce or fifth of bourbon at their grave and pour a drink on the ground for them. Or throw a party in their name and memory.

DON'T LET SOMEONE ELSE'S DEATH BECOME YOUR OWN

No one can tell you how to grieve; we all do it in our own way. But however you do it, allow yourself the chance to grieve, feel the pain and heal again. Go out and still do what you were doing before. Live with a new memory of a good friend lost — but live.

—ERIC STEPHENS

STRANGER IN MY OWN LAND: GROWING UP HOMELESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

My name is Anubi. I was born and raised in San Francisco. I am a formerly homeless transitional-age youth.

My story began in the late fall of 1993. I was the product of a last-ditch effort to save a failing marriage, and I felt it pretty early on. My brother took the ensuing divorce even harder because he was ten years older than me. Both of my parents are natives of the city, as are my mother's parents and my brother.

I experienced my first episode of homelessness from when I was still in the womb until I was six months old. My mother is a pathological liar and told my father that she had a place to stay. In reality, she was living in her car until a nice couple with a six-month-old baby boy took her in. I was born that night at UCSF.

At six months old, my father claimed custody. I lived with him until I was about six years old. After that I lived with my mom in the city mostly, but we moved around in the Bay Area until I was about 14.

There were many times when we were without a house and resorted to couch surfing. I always went to school in the city though—that was the only constant in my life. I was a pretty bright student. That all changed when I was 15 years old.

I was 15 years old in February of 2009 when I tried weed for the first time. I started doing the regular teenage song and dance. Around this time I started hanging out on Haight and Castro. I'll tell you, it was the best time of my life. Being on Haight was being a part of something magical, euphoric, and grand.

At some point in '09 I tried acid for the first time, which would eventually lead to my downfall. When I turned 16 I thought to myself, "I think I'm an adult. It's time to start my

life on my own." My mother had cerebral palsy and could only walk with the assistance of two canes. I was tired of cleaning up her shit and piss. I needed to get out.

I had also come out as bisexual by that time, so I started living on Haight and Castro. As someone who is bisexual, I naturally gravitated towards the Castro. As a hippie, I gravitated towards the Haight. I usually slept on random streets or at friends' places, but never at shelters. I couldn't stand them.

I'll tell you, it's hard being a teenage runaway in your own town. I got caught a lot at first, but then my family just stopped trying—mostly because of the frightful person I became when I was tripping—unless I was put in a mental hospital. It was my mother and once my brother who came to my aid, but my stays never lasted long.

Eventually I started traveling up and down the West Coast, but my trips would be short-lived. I spent most of my time in the city.

Now that I've provided you with some background info on myself, I can get to the real reason I endeavored to write this article. When I was sleeping on the street, it wasn't the fact that I was sleeping on concrete or the fact that I got woken up at 7 a.m. on a daily basis. It was the fact that I was ostracized in the city of my birth.

Wherever I would go, most people who were not homeless would have a genuine fear of me. I can still remember the fear I would see in their faces or the look of contempt. I would remember thinking about being raised on the ideal of universal acceptance. When I was homeless though, I would rarely see that ideal being practised.

For the longest time, I felt as though I was a stranger in my own land.

ANUBI



ZAK



STREET POLITICS TO PUBLIC POLICY

My name is Zak Franet, and I am incredibly excited to be writing for the Street Sheet's Youth Edition. As a homeless advocate with lived experience, I could not stress the importance more of providing personal testimonials around the issue of homelessness, and as such, applaud the Coalition on Homelessness's efforts to bring our stories into the light.

I am 23 years old and heavily involved in advocacy and youth empowerment in the City. One avenue for this advocacy has been through the Youth Policy and Advisory Committee (YPAC), a council of homeless and formerly homeless youth. The committee was formed in October of 2016 as a perquisite for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant that San Francisco applied for. In the ten months we have existed as a body, we've gone through many changes.

Initially our purpose was to give our input on the grant application. Youth of all walks of life told their truth about what made our City unique, what we were doing well, what was still needed, and why San Francisco should be chosen as a recipient of the grant. By the start of the new year, we had received the news that San Francisco had been chosen to receive an influx of money to help address youth homelessness. Our group dynamic has gone through a shift as a result of this announcement.

The YPAC has become an open platform for San Francisco's youth to have direct access to service providers as well as government officials who will be directly affecting the types of services they receive. We have spoken with members of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, the Department of Health, and numerous other entities in order to expand our knowledge of available services while simultaneously broadening the horizons of those providers in regards to what was still needed. Our monthly meetings have become

regular attended forums critiquing the system by those who access it.

In addition, the YPAC has continued to be involved with the grant, providing feedback and insight at the YHDP planning meetings as to what is needed in our community to help end youth homelessness. We have updated the Local Homeless Coordinating Board (LHCB) on our progress and issues pertaining to our community. At the last LHCB meeting, our committee received widespread media attention, making the front page of the Examiner. Youth from our committee will be selected to be members of the governing body responsible for approving funding for all projects regarding the YHDP.

In short, the YPAC has been a vehicle for advocacy and policy work for many a youth throughout San Francisco. We have participated in local, statewide, and national advocacy. We have evoked the interest of the press, elected officials, and public. The YPAC has functioned as a banner that those committed to ending youth homelessness have rallied around. I can't wait to see what is in store for the advocates who have been involved in this project.

I would like to give a special shoutout to the Larkin Street Youth Advisory Board and the LYRIC Fellows. They have been tireless in their determination to participate in this process from the very beginning, and have been bulwarks in carrying the message. They have taken advantage of every opportunity to get the message out there and advocate for their peers. I am inspired by their efforts on a regular basis.

We will continue to apply street politics to the arena of public policy while remaining true to our roots.

Sincerely,
Zak Franet,
Member
Youth Policy and Advisory Committee

San Francisco...I always thought about running to the little city by the bay for the longest time growing up, and as I got older the voice in my head started to get louder. Now at the ripe age of 22, I have a place in the city to call home for the next two years, thanks to Larkin Street Youth Services.

Getting here did not come without struggle. My background is as part of the LGBT community, and growing up with a Dad and Mom who are a part of the Southern Baptist church was—and continues to be—rough. Luckily, my Mom came to accept it. My Dad, not so much.

My roots will always be with the church. It's a part of me. Even so, growing up in a small town like Aiken, South Carolina you learn to keep your mouth shut about certain things. This is especially true when you're a black transman who can't pass yet. Everybody in town would've dunked me in holy water and thrown bibles at me if I'd even whispered the word, so tomboy clothes it was. Daydreaming about being on the football team was all I had back in those days.

I never understood what I was going through. I would later come to think I was a lesbian, and for a while it worked. I was somewhat happy. When my Mom first found out I liked girls she would go through my phone at night while I was sleeping. She would confront me in the morning asking, "Why are you like this? You never used to be like this."

She even took it further one time and called up a girl saying, "You're turning my God-fearing daughter into a lesbian—you disgust me. I never want you to speak to my daughter again." At that point I knew it was time to come out. In the next week, I did. It didn't go well at all, but by the next month, my Mom came to accept that I wouldn't change for anyone.

After that, I started dressing even more like a boy and started wearing my brother's cologne. I became more and more unsatisfied when people continued to call me a woman. That's when I started becoming depressed and taking my anger out on my arms. I just wanted to be happy, but I wouldn't dare tell anyone that I was thinking about being a boy yet.

The day I heard about being transgendered and finally understood that I wasn't the only one who felt like this, old thoughts about going to San Francisco started popping up in my head.

By then my family was no longer living in South Carolina. We had moved to a cozy house on Mill Bridge in Athens, Georgia. Athens was the town that saved me in a way. I went to my first gay bar, kissed my first girl, and even got into the nasty habit of smoking cigarettes. I knew small town life would never be enough for me though, no matter how liberal it was. I knew being stuck in this body would end up killing me.

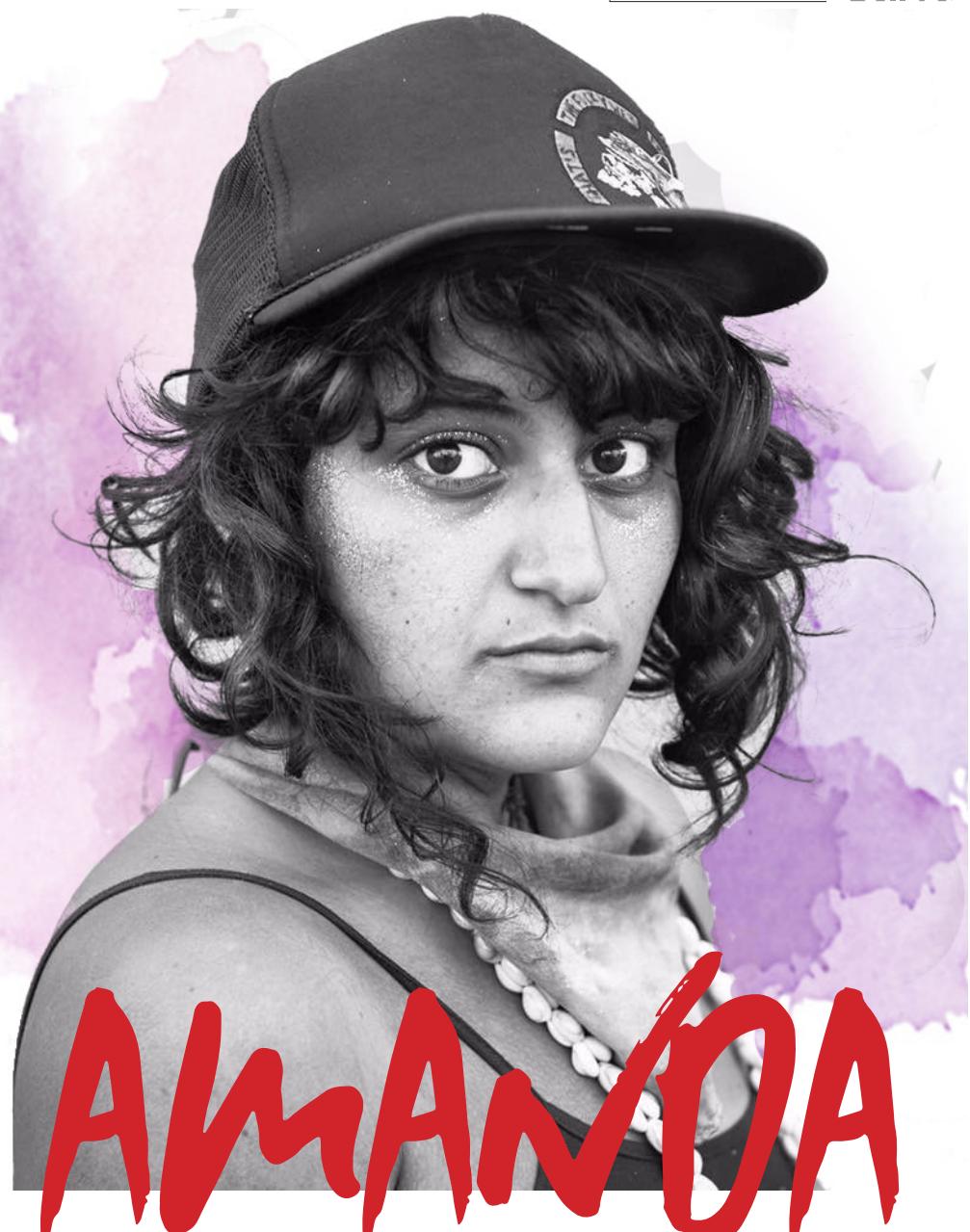
I needed a change, so at 18 I left home and moved in with my Dad in Manteca, California. That only lasted for a couple of months before he kicked me out after I came out to him as a lesbian. Before my Dad bought me a plane ticket back home to Georgia, I begged him to drop me off in San Francisco with my biological Mom, Treenia.

I was finally in San Francisco. Later, I left Treenia's place and found Larkin Street Youth Services. I didn't come out as Trans until three years down the road because I wanted to tell my Mom first. At 21, I moved back home after finding out my Mom had stage three breast cancer.

I stayed there to support her, but on my 22nd birthday I had to come back to the city. She told me to leave because she knew I wasn't happy there. All she wanted was for me to be happy. A few months after coming back to the city, I knew I couldn't put my life on hold anymore. I needed to come out. I surprised my mom by taking a trip up to good ol' Georgia on the day of her surgery.

A couple days later, I came out as Nicolas Warren Twiggs. I returned to San Francisco as Nicolas Lee Twiggs. My mom picked the middle name. She couldn't have been happier for me, and that was honestly the happiest moment of my life.

Now fast forward to the present—July 17. Everyone calls me Nico and my testosterone treatments begin at the end of the month. Life is just starting for me, and I couldn't be happier.



AMANDA

I'm a Gypsy, at least in the modern-day Western sense of the term. I live with no home because I move around too much to put effort into owning one. I've been in San Fransitshow for three months, and I have a full-blown memoir of stupid shit the cops have done since I've been here. I'm convinced that nothing would've happened if I had a house and a job.

During my time on the Haight, I've had too many run-ins with the cops for stupid reasons. Three weeks ago, I was punched in the face by a Goodwill employee for no reason other than that I smelled bad. After punching him back in self-defense, I ended up the person handcuffed on the sidewalk. The cops told me if I wanted to sit in the sun for three hours and stay all summer for court, the man would get a misdemeanor charge. He would still keep his job. Obviously this wasn't an attractive offer for an up-and-coming artist who was trying to clean up her image. Nothing has happened to avenge the injustice sense.

A few weeks later, a yuppie came out of a bar, whipped out his junk, and took a piss in front of all of us. The cops showed up as soon as my friends started yelling for him to go away. As soon as the cops were informed on what the altercation was about, they immediately cut off their lights and left without a word. I am sure that if one of us, the homeless folk of the Haight, was the offender in question, we would be on the special registry. Instead, the yuppie returned to the bar—where there's a toilet available to him—unscathed by the law. It wasn't just stupid. It was downright disgusting.

The cops who worked my Goodwill case have been entrapping me since that day. We call them Ebony and Ivory. They've been asking my friends what I've been up to while referring to me as "the chunky one." They even went so far as to tell us they're "hanging out" on our corner with us to make sure we aren't doing anything illegal. This all stemmed from the

fact that I got punched in the face while doing nothing wrong. Everything they've been doing is completely illegal. Apparently, Haight street cops are above the law.

Every street kid knows no sit/no lie. From the hours of 7 am to 11 pm, we aren't allowed to sit on the sidewalk, even with a lawn chair. The cops have been lying to us telling us we have to get up at 6 am instead of 7am. It shouldn't be a surprise that yuppies have immunity from this ordinance.

I've gotten a ticket for sitting next to a yuppie who got drunk way too early and passed out on the sidewalk around 9:30 PM. Their defense was that the yuppie wasn't used to being out late, and that they were not blatantly breaking the rule. The yuppie did not know they were breaking the law—therefore, they broke no law.

St. Agnes Church on Masonic has always been one of the safe places to sleep for the homeless of the Haight. After repeated camping tickets in the park, my husband and I retired to the church for overnight refuge from the law. Despite the church's friendly reputation, we were awoken at 5:30 am by a pair of cops. We were charged with trespassing, despite the fact the church put up the signs the day before, and despite the fact that the only sign was on the other side of the block. We were given no warnings, but we have yet another hundred dollar ticket under each of our belts. The cops had no explanation as to how this could possibly be just, let alone fair. They just tough toenails-ed us and sent us on our groggy way.

There are plenty of adjectives I could use to describe San Francisco's anti-homeless laws and the way the police enforce them. "Stupid" seems to fit the best for the purposes of explaining what I've gone through on Haight Street. The cops want us to leave their city, but they've got quite another thing coming. I'll be here all summer, and I am their worst nightmare.

MICOLAS



THE FOSTER "CARE" SYSTEM

ALLISON PHUONG

Every two minutes a child enters the foster care system due to a traumatic event such as abuse, neglect, abandonment, or sudden parental death in the household. They are ripped from their home and thrown into a new one with strangers who are now supposed to be their new family. Sometimes, this is the end of the story, but most of the time, the child continues to be moved from one place to another.

Let's meet Emily, a former foster youth and now mother of three-year-old Emma. Emily was born in San Francisco and grew up on Treasure Island. She remembers the beautiful view of the Bay Bridge and running around to all the "cool secret spots" on the island. She was smiling as she reminisced about how she lived with her older sister, younger brother, and her mother. That smile quickly vanished when she started talking about her stepfather. Whenever Emily's mother would leave the house, her stepfather would take advantage of that.

Let's say she went out without telling him or didn't clean something properly—that would result in a beating.

"He would hit me for nothing, and I was just a five year old kid, maybe four at the time, and the abuse went on until I was seven." It was later found that her stepfather had been sexually abusing her older sister and also raped her.

Finally, the teachers at Emily's school started realizing that the black eyes weren't from an accident on the playground, but something much more serious. They called the police right away and Child Protective Services (CPS) came and took the three kids away to a foster home. In an ideal world, CPS would work to protect children by mending families and helping children find permanent homes through community partnerships. In practice, it usually doesn't work that way: Families are torn apart as siblings are forced into separate foster homes; children may go through multiple foster care homes—and, consequently, schools—in a short period of time.

In Emily's case, she and her sister were separated from their brother because there wasn't enough room for him.

Once in the foster care system, there are different living situations a foster child can be placed. There are foster homes which are typically for children under the age of thirteen where the guardian will go through a background check and then receive a short and brief training. Every month the parents receive a stipend of a couple of hundred dollars for fostering the child. The government tries to make the process of fostering a child as easy and enticing as possible, which is why sometimes we see foster parents who unfortunately are only in it for the stipend.

Then there are group homes which typically house older kids, perhaps due to a stigma around raising teenagers. Emily explains how "as a foster kid, after the age of eleven, if you are bad, they're not going to want you as much, so you will most



On any given day, there are nearly 428,000 children in foster care in the United States.

In 2015, more than 20,000 young people aged out of foster care without permanent families.

While most children in foster care live in family settings, a substantial minority — 14 percent — live in institutions or group homes.

In 2015, more than half of children entering U.S. foster care were young people of color.

In 2015, more than 62,000 children — whose mothers' and

fathers' parental rights had been legally terminated — were waiting to be adopted. Children typically wait 2 years to be adopted.

The average age of kids in care is 9 years old.

25 percent of children who age out of foster system still suffer from the direct effects of PTSD.

33 percent of children in foster care change elementary schools five or more times, causing them to fall behind academically and experience social and emotional disruptions.

likely be placed in a group home instead of a foster home. It all depends though, it's hard to say, but sometimes let's say the kid is fifteen, they could still have a chance to get into a foster home if they're good." As a foster child, you are branded and selected based on the way you act and present yourself. This process can be very harmful and dehumanizing on a young child.

Emily has lived in a variety of different types of foster homes, which vary based on how "at-risk" the child is. At-risk children—who may have more behavioral issues—are placed at larger homes, while typically, lower risk children live in smaller foster homes of around eight people.

One of the worst experiences Emily was when she was living in a foster home with another child who had prader-willi syndrome, which disables your brain from knowing when you get full. Because of that, this child had a specific diet where

they would eat really small portions (For example, a quarter of a bagel for breakfast) and Emily was expected to eat exactly what this kid ate. The foster mom basically starved her. After getting turned down so many times, she started looking for food at night. One night, she found a pack of marijuana! She immediately called her caseworker because she didn't want to stay there anymore.

The caseworker must have told the foster mom that she would be arriving because when the caseworker came to the house, the foster mom had a scratch on her arm and blamed it on Emily. Emily had no idea what was going on and why she was accused for something she didn't do. When she got moved to the next home, she found that the foster mom had destroyed all of her clothes with paint and glue.

When she stayed in the group homes, sometimes the other foster kids would steal

her belongings, harass her, and basically "make her life hell" if you were an outsider and you weren't their friend.

Emily was constantly on the run. At one point, her social worker and judge got tired of her running away so she was placed in a lockdown center. It was a location where she was monitored 24/7 by staff who made sure no one could leave unless you could prove that you wouldn't run away.

The center eventually lost its funds and they said they would move her to Juvenile Hall in Arizona since it was closing down and she wouldn't be able to complete her time. Emily ended up running away again.

She was seventeen and had been in more than ten different homes.

At the age of nineteen, she was imprisoned for a juvenile warrant. At this point, she was pregnant and homeless. When she got out, she received some help and applied to government funded programs and got back on her feet.

Now, she is housed with her daughter and is working full time.

The system provides foster kids a temporary place to call home, but what happens when they age out of the system? At the age of eighteen, foster children are expected to transition from being apart of this support system, to an independent adult. Fifty percent of foster children who age out of the system end up homeless.

While AB12 has extended foster care until the age of 21, not many people are aware of the bill and there's a lot of criteria that comes along with it in order to qualify. Overall, we need more funding for more social workers and caseworkers to help guide foster youth, more awareness and more support overall.

It's important to note that the only way a child can get into the foster system is through a report from CPS. Imagine young children who are being beaten or neglected that might not know any better or know how they can get help. Teachers and society in general should be more informed of warning signs and how they can help better this situation.

Emily says that if she could improve the system, she would start by creating child development classes that foster parents and guardians have to take. They can get certificates that qualify them to actually foster children. As of right now, all it takes to be a foster parent is a background check, fingerprint, and a quick training—which certainly is not enough! With this course maybe foster and group homes will become safer and happier places.

Emily recalls most of her childhood as traumatic but she also explains how the foster care system has supported her in many ways. It's important to know that not all foster kids' experiences are like the ones she described. There are many great ones out there.

Emily's story is one story out of many. Let foster children voices be heard, so that we can better this system and stop the suffering.

LEAST FAVORITE THINGS BY TAYLOR

Sprinklers turning on while I'm sleeping
 Wetting my things, oh what was I thinking!
 I never know what each night will bring.
 This is one of my least favorite things.
 Young men lurking, scheming, and thieving
 Stealing my things and leaving me seething.
 I never know what each night will bring.
 This is one of my least favorite things.
 When the bugs bite, when the wind chills, when it rains all night.
 I add these to my least favorite things because they make me so sad!
 Security constantly making me move.
 I'm not sure what they're trying to prove.
 I never know what each night will bring.
 This is one of my least favorite things.
 Ankles swollen beyond recognition.
 It's amazing I can walk in this condition.
 I never know what each night will bring.
 This is one of my least favorite things.
 When my soul aches, when my mind hurts for being awake too long.
 I add it to my least favorite things which is the purpose of this poem!



Photo by Robert Gumpert.

THESE PEOPLE BY TAYLOR

Asleep in a drop in center in the middle of the night
 I heard these words, left suspended in the air.
 "What's wrong with 'these people'?"
 These people, said by someone whose job it is to serve and help.
 If you don't like, "these people," why are you even here?
 Too often those managing the homeless see themselves as baby sitters
 And treat the clients as such.
 Instead of being a resource, thereby demanding those in need
 become more resourceful.
 The homeless are not "these people."
 They are not second class citizens.
 They are people.
 Let's treat them as such.

I RAN BY RAVEN

I RAN FROM ALL THE NAMES THEY
 CALLED ME—
 LOSER, FAGGOT PUNK
 I RAN INTO THE SCRAPYARD WITH THE
 OTHER USELESS JUNK
 I RAN FROM ALL THE MADNESS AND ALL
 THE RAGING PAIN
 I RAN, SEEKING OBLIVION,
 A NEEDLE IN A WEIN
 YOU CAN RUN UNTIL YOU FIND SOME
 BLESSED SECRET SPACE
 YOU CAN RUN AWAY FROM EVERYONE—
 REJECT THE HUMAN RACE
 BUT YOU WILL JUST BE
 RUNNING BLIND
 UNTIL YOU STOP AND SEE
 THAT TO TURN AROUND
 AND FACE YOURSELF
 IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE FREE!

DURING AN EYE OF A STORM
 STILLNESS AND CALM SURROUND ME.
 THAT BREATH WAS LIKE NONE I HAD
 TAKEN BEFORE, PARTING MY COLD CHAPPED LIPS.
 I HAVE AWOKEN FRESH TO AN EARLY MORNING
 TO FIND THAT THE STORM, ALTHOUGH
 NOT OVER, WAS SILENT. I GAVE UP.
 I REALIZED THE FREEDOM I HAD TO BREATHE
 KNOWING THE CHAOTIC STORM SURROUNDED ME ON ALL SIDES.
 THE STORM LIKE LIFE CRASHING THUNDER
 OF CHILDHOOD STRIKING BLOWS AS AN
 ADULT, YET SOMEWHERE THROUGHOUT
 THE MIDDLE, MY CHOICES DIRECT ME TO
 THE EYE, THE CALM FREEDOM WHEN
 I RELEASE MY CHOICES AND LET MY LORD
 TAKE MY LIFE AND LEAD ME THROUGH THE STORM.

Poetry

FRUSTRATED

BY HABLO



Frustrated by the constraints of my mind,
 the fact that I walk in the room and gotta command space, cuz according to colonization, space
 aint rightfully mines
 the fact that patriarchy got me messed up, telling girls in saudi arabia that they can't go to
 school, tellin my home grrrls in the barrio that their worth aint nothing unless their stomach is
 baby full
 promoting marriage and child rearing amongst young low income women of color, as opposed
 to tellin us that we can grasp a higher conscious and that we have the capacity to inspire
 another
 it's always someone else's problem, fault and excuse that allows for women to put another
 woman's capacity aside,
 you say you on another level but full of conscious "woke" pride
 i got normalized delusions living under white supremacy, cuz if i be addressing every single
 injustice i see, these people don't know what they get when they mess with me,
 when they question the strength that is women of color and our flow
 it take them all but a second longer glance to see that wisdom we got, the others won't ever
 know.
 that's why they scared and second guessin, cuz the power of mi hermanas y curandera
 blessings are higher than they can ever conceive of my essence.
 Frustrated. cuz they make us fill the void of generations of trauma,
 with a colonized mindset, that we deserve to be poor, we just gotta be smarta
 they got us fighting over turf and which woman belongs to who,
 all in the scheme of trying two distract us from the fat cats droppin bombs on hospitals and
 schools
 got mi compas of afrodescent saying that black lives matter. you hear me? Black Lives Matter.
 fighting for the right to breathe, fighting a new set of laws disguised, with racist banter
 got indigenous people fighting greedy corporations before and after Standing Rock,
 what they think? they could just destroy sacred water and aint sumthin gonna pop off?
 Frustrated. cuz women and children are being held like prisoners on the southern border, as if
 the shipment to refill gun demands in latin america didn't come from a white man's order

so, ima check u for a minute- just cuz you buy a headdress dont mean u cultured,
 just cuz u paint your face for dia de los muertos don't mean you have a right to build an altar
 just cuz you listen to rap music don't mean you understand the struggle
 just cuz you identify as an intersectional feminist ally- don't mean you humble.
 so ima let this be known. i don't got time to educate you, i don't have a smile for the male
 privilege you exert,
 so you a male feminist? meanwhile not givin a damn about the women's mentality and body you
 hurt.
 you want to beat another woman silly cuz she slept with your man?
 i'll talk with you about the historical, social factors that disintegrate a woman's capacity to only
 being able to keep a man
 ya i'm Frustrated, cuz white feminism is focusing on equal pay for women, my first thought is,
 what type of women?
 Frustrated cuz me cruising in the lgbtq community got me filled with "spicy" adjectives and
 presumptuous people of interest...
 Frustrated. so damn Frustrated, with racism, xenophobia, transphobia and countless other
 oppressions. Frustrated with this world cuz you're seen as weak when you show sincere
 affection
 got me out here, protesting, learning, eating, sleeping, reading, leanin, Frustrated.
 still, i stay, brown, queer, chubby, clever, decolonized and radically educated.
 So all i know is, i'm not gonna die Frustrated, i'm doing something about it

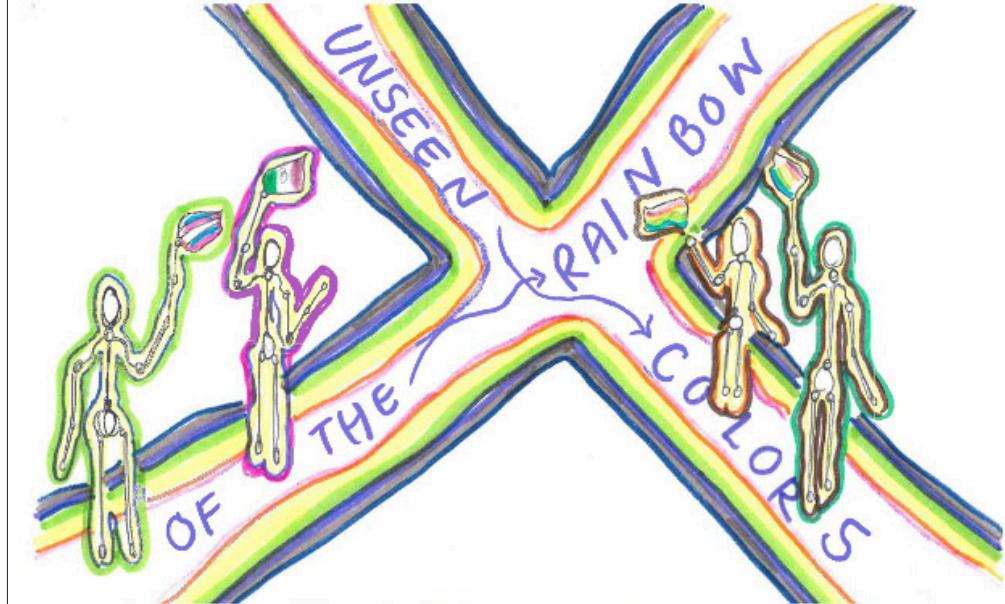
WRITER'S CORNER

"They carried the sky. The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it, they carried gravity." — Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

What do you carry? Think about all the things in your pockets and in your bag. Think about all the thoughts and emotions that fill your mind and your heart. What objects, experiences, and pieces of the world do you carry with you that make you who you are?

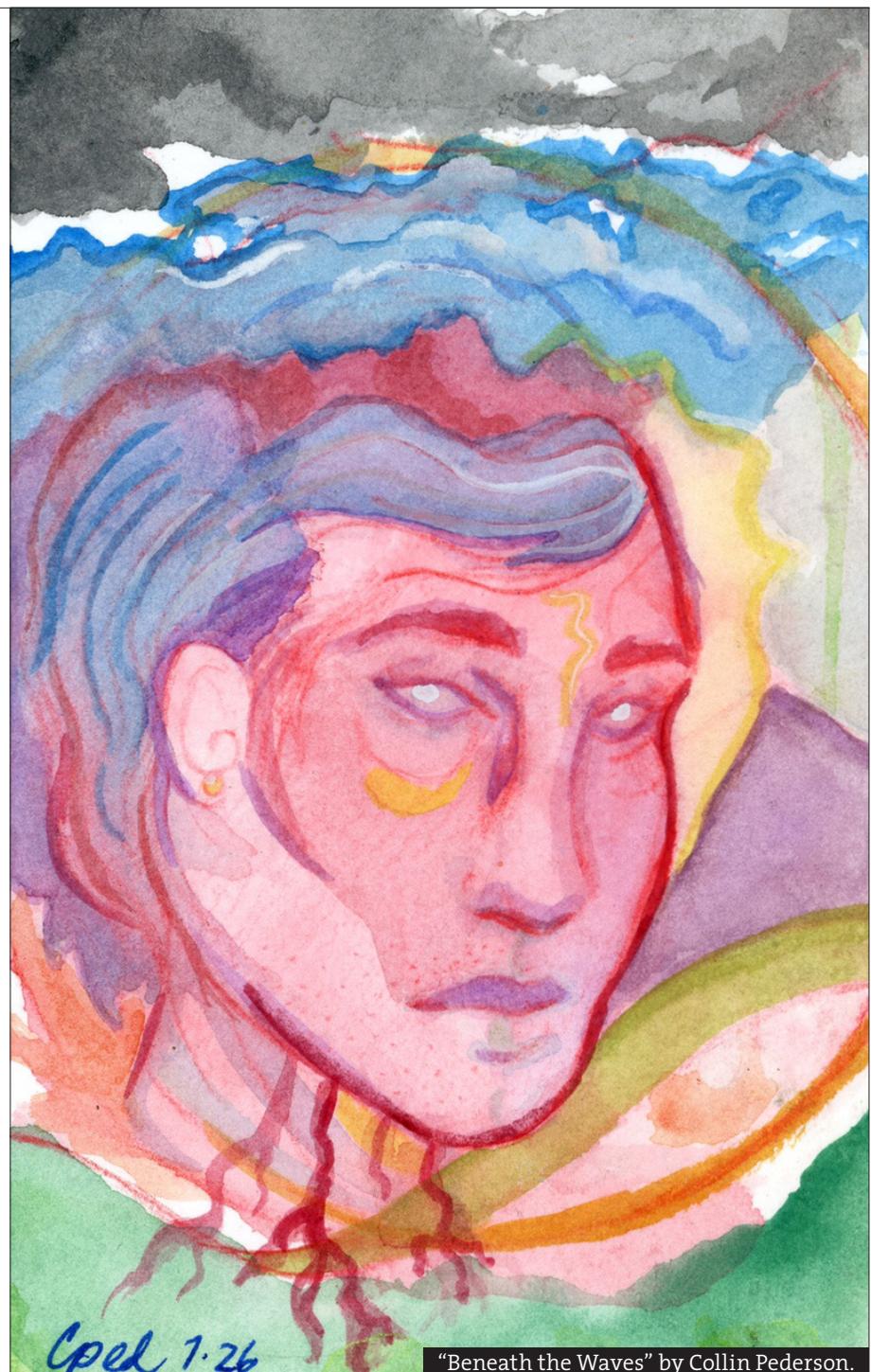
Write a list poem where every line begins with "I carry..."

ARTWORK



"Unseen Colors of the Rainbow" by Anastazia.

My name is Anastazia. I use she and they pronouns. Homelessness affects many people. A community it affects strongly and most personally, for me, is the Trans and Gender Nonconforming communities. As someone who identifies as Trans and Gender Nonconforming and someone who was formerly homeless, it was difficult to navigate a system of binary shelters in the city. I would fear to sleep in men's shelters as I did not feel safe, because I did not identify as male. In female adult shelters there were women who did not understand what Trans or Gender Nonconforming meant. I was at a cross-roads with people and the shelter system. My art piece reflects that there are many diverse and beautiful roads for us to take in our identities. Some of these roads and colors are unseen in our society and need to be seen! San Francisco adult shelters should more openly represent us Trans and Gender Nonconforming and make homelessness a little bit brighter for the LGBTQ community, especially Trans and Gender Nonconforming people.



"Beneath the Waves" by Collin Pederson.

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